

## LEADERSHIP LAB

### LESSON 1: STEPS FROM THE PAST



*discipline  
drill  
maneuver  
precision  
unison*

#### PURPOSE

This lesson introduces you to the importance of **drill** and ceremonies, their history and purpose. The **precision** and timing of drill promotes skill, teamwork, and **discipline**. In later lessons, you will see how you can polish your image and personal appearance with the right look, prepare yourself for inspections, understand the roles of leaders and followers in drill, and practice individual drill movements.

#### INTRODUCTION

In 1775, when this country was striving for independence and existence, the nation's leaders were confronted with the problem of not only establishing a government, but also organizing an army that was already engaged in war. From the "shot heard around the world" on 19 April 1775, until Valley Forge in 1778, revolutionary forces were little more than a group of civilians fighting Indian-style against well-trained, highly disciplined British forces.

For three years, General Washington's troops endured many hardships — lack of funds, rations, clothing, and equipment. Additionally, they suffered loss after loss to the superior British troops. These hardships and losses mostly stemmed from the lack of a military atmosphere in this country.

Recognizing the crisis, General Washington (through Benjamin Franklin, the American Ambassador to France) enlisted the aid of a Prussian officer, Baron Friedrich von Steuben. Upon his arrival at Valley Forge on 23 February 1778, Baron von Steuben, a former staff officer with Frederick the Great, met an army of several thousand half-starved, wretched men in rags. His first comment was, "No European army could be kept together in such a state." To correct these conditions, he set to work immediately, writing drill movements and regulations at night and teaching a model company of 120 men during the day.

Discipline became a part of military life for these selected individuals, and they learned to respond to commands without hesitation. This new discipline instilled in these soldiers a sense of alertness, urgency, and attention to detail. Confidence in themselves and in their weapons grew as each man perfected the movements. As they mastered the art of drill, they began to work as a team, and they developed a sense of pride in their unit.

Observers were amazed to see how quickly and orderly von Steuben could form and **maneuver** the troops into different battle formations. Officers observed that organization, chain of command, and control were improved as each man had a specific place and task within the formation.

Later, General Washington dispersed the members of the model company throughout the Army to teach drill. From this drill instruction, they improved the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Army.

To ensure this uniformity and overall effectiveness continued, von Steuben wrote the first field manual for the U.S. Army in 1779: *The Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States* (commonly referred to as the Blue Book). The Army did not change the drill procedures initiated at Valley Forge for 85 years, until the American Civil War. In fact, many of those original drill terms and procedures still remain in effect today.

## PURPOSES/OBJECTIVES OF DRILL

Throughout history, armies have practiced drill. In times of war, leaders used drill to move troops and equipment quickly from one location to another in an orderly manner. Drills also show how many can move as one in a flawlessly-timed effort. These **unison** movements are still important on the battlefield where mistakes can cost lives. In peacetime, drill provides a means of enhancing morale, developing a spirit of cohesion, and presenting traditional and well-executed ceremonies.

When individuals react to commands rather than thought, the result is more than just a good-looking ceremony or parade — it is discipline! Drill has been and will continue to be the backbone of military discipline. In addition to discipline, military drill teaches and develops:

- Self-confidence
- Personal pride
- Esprit de corps
- Teamwork
- Attention to detail
- Unit pride

## CONCLUSION

Through hard work and discipline, you can learn and develop the leadership skills and abilities necessary to become an effective leader in drill as well as in many other situations. An individual with pride and discipline will respond on command to produce the finest drill maneuvers in all of JROTC. Make your first step a good one and follow it through with others of which you can be equally proud of yourself and of your achievements.

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